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A DISCOURSE *on the Natural Dis-*
position of Mankind in respect to
COMMERCE; *intended as a Pre-*
liminary to a larger Work, viz.
The Elements of Commerce, and
Theory of Taxes.

THE Powers, with which it hath pleased the munificent Creator to endow Mankind, are suited to such important Ends, that a wrong Application of them cannot but be productive of Infelicity, as a right Use is the Source of all that Happiness, for which human Nature was designed. Now these Powers are various, according to the different Effects proposed to be obtained by them. If, for Example, The Faculties of Man are consider'd meerly in regard to his *Animal* State, it must appear, that he has most of those Instincts which other Creatures feel, in order to answer the Demands of Animal Life. But take a View of him in an higher Character, as a Member of Civil Society, and a Subject of Moral Government, He will then be found, not only to have a Temper and Disposition adapted to *Social* Relations, but also to enjoy the Privilege of Reason or Reflection, to guide each

Instinct and Passion to attain its proper End. And therefore the general and Constituent Principles of Human Nature may thus be summed up: Man hath the Appetites of an Animal,—The Tempers and Affections of a Social Creature—And the Understanding of a Rational Agent.

LET us take a View of Human Nature in each of these Capacities.

I. As *mere Animals* Mankind are powerfully incited by Instinct to provide for their *animal Wants*; which in general are much the same with those of other Animals. Only I think it deserves to be taken Notice of, That Mankind are never supplied by Nature with the Benefit of *Cloathing*: And as to *Food* and *Dwelling*, if we consider Men in their natural and independent State, before they are assisted by each other, and their Talents mutually improved, they will be found to be less able to make Provision for themselves, than any of the Brute Creation. Now these are very remarkable Variations in the Ways of Providence; and yet not to be considered as any Imperfections or Omissions in regard to Man; but as a most admirable and gracious Contrivance of the Author of Nature to answer great and useful Ends. For other Beings, who are only designed for the Uses of Animal Life, are not endowed with any Qualification, but what is necessary to this Purpose: And therefore all their Saga-

city and Knowledge shine forth at once in full Perfection; and they are quite Strangers to any subsequent Alterations, or higher Improvements. For Instance, the first Nest that is built by any of the Feather'd Tribe is as exquisite in its Workmanship, and as curious in its Contrivance as the last: And the Lion and the Vulture do not much improve in the Use of their respective Weapons. In short, the same Original Plan continues throughout;— Nor do the Birds, Beasts and Fishes discover any Disposition to divide the Labour of the Community into different Branches, or assign distinct Parts to the respective Individuals.

THIS, I think, is the Case, in general, with respect to the Brute Creation. But if there are any Traces of Superior Abilities, they are so few and insignificant, as not to deserve a particular Enquiry. Nay, where-soever any Tribe of Animals portion out the common Labour of the Society into different Parts (as is said to be the Case among the Beavers, Ants, and Bees) there it hath been always observ'd, that they make some Advances Superior to the Condition of mere Animal Life, having a Species of Commerce, and a Form of Government.

BUT if Man had no other Powers than what are to be traced in the Brute Creation, He would not only be one of them, but perhaps the most miserable, and the lowest

of the Kind. For, as was observed before, he hath many Defects, consider'd as a mere Animal, which they have not: At least, this would render all Mankind so much upon a Level, that the social Relations of High and Low, Rich and Poor, Master and Servant, Benefactor and Receiver, Governor and Governed, Learned and Illiterate, wou'd be absolutely unknown.

AND tho' it is scarce possible to conceive any Human Creature, much less any Number of them, altogether in this Condition, yet the very mentioning of such a Case is sufficient to prove, even in this View of the Subject, That Mankind feel in their own Nature a Disposition to Commerce; which is implanted there for much nobler Ends, than appear at first Sight; inasmuch as the very Being of Moral Government, the whole Circle of Arts and Sciences, and of social Duties, depend upon this Commercial Disposition. For were it not for this distinguishing Characteristic, what wou'd there be in a Collection of Men, more than is to be found in a Flock of Sheep, an Herd of Cattle, or a Flight of Birds? Nay, the wild *Indians*, those Human Savages, who having chiefly no other than Animal Wants, are consequently their own Proveditors in supplying them, live such Lives, as are but a few Removes from their neighbouring Savages in the Woods,

2. LET us therefore, in the next Place consider Mankind as actuated by *Benevolent* or *Social* Affections. This Principle is, for the most Part, the Prerogative of Man: For tho' other Animals *herd* together (which may be called *conversing*) yet we cannot observe, That they are inclined to do many good Offices for each other. They shew no Disposition to part with their Food or their Dwelling to relieve the Miseries of the Afflicted, or to shelter their Fellow-Creature from the Pursuits of the merciless Hunter: And when a Stranger is introduced among them, they are so far from shewing any Signs of Hospitality, that they treat him as a common Enemy, 'till Time has familiarised them, and made them better acquainted with one another.

—Indeed I will allow, That all Animals discover, for a Season, the strongest Affection for their Offspring, and give many Proofs of a like temporary Domestic Kindness for each other: But these are distinct Regards, which proceed rather from a Species of Self-Love, than Social Benevolence. The Male and the Female have a Passion implanted in them for the Propagation of their Species; and they love their Young with a most ardent Affection, 'till they are capable of providing for themselves. But all this is different from Social Friendship, different from the Love of virtuous Characters, and the Delight that is felt in the Communication of Good

Offices to the rest of the Species, when they either deserve, or stand in Need of them.

MANKIND therefore, being thus under the Influence of *Social* or Benevolent Affections, are prompted to seek Society, as the only Means of gratifying these Social Instincts. And being thus brought together, they find the Advantage of that Assistance in each other, which they wanted in a separate and independent State. Now this mutual Assistance becomes a very strong additional Tye to the Bands of Society, because here Self, and Social Love co-incide in creating a joint Happiness, and a common Interest. And then each Person chooses that Course of Life, which is most suited to his Genius, his Circumstances, or Situation ; I have particularly mentioned his *Genius*, inasmuch as some Men are formed by *Nature* to peculiar Employments, being born with Talents, or a kind of *Instinctive* Knowledge for one Pursuit preferably to another ; which is a Circumstance not discoverable in any of the Brute Creation. And therefore among the Human Species some are employed in the several Articles of Clothing, others in Raising of Provisions, and a third Set in preparing Materials, and building Habitations. Thus are the *first*, or *Animal* Wants of Mankind much better supplied by dividing the general Labour into different Branches, than if each Individual depended on Himself alone for the supplying

of those Wants. And this Portioning out of Labour gave Rise to different *Trades* and *Manufactures*, and may be considered as the *first Draught*, or *Rudiments of Commerce*.

BUT if Society is a Means of procuring a Supply for our *Animal* Wants, it creates a Multitude of others, which may be called *Social*; because their Rise and Progress must be ascribed to Society, and the Figure which Men make in it. Now these Wants are more or less extensive according to the several Ranks and Stations, the different Improvements, Customs, Education, Desires, and other *Qualities* of Mankind. And the greater the Variety and Degree of those, the more strongly are we moved by the Principle of Self-Love to labour after the Goods, Honours, and Pleasures we have in View: Because our present *secular* Happiness appears to arise from the Enjoyment of these Things.

THUS therefore the Passion of Self-Love operates with much greater Force, when excited by such a Train of Objects, and spurr'd on by Emulation, Avarice, Profusion, or Ambition, than it possibly could do, were Men Strangers to the Artificial Wants, the Refinements, and Decorations of Social Life. And yet were this Passion (so necessary for the Purposes of Commerce, and all the Blessings resulting from it) to proceed without Direction, or Controul, it wou'd, in a great Measure, defeat its own Ends. For Self-

Love principally seeks its own Gratification, without much Regard to the Interests of others. And as every Individual is prompted to act in the same Manner, Society itself wou'd be in Danger of being dissolved in the Contest: In short, Self-Interest is the great *Monopolizing* Principle in the Human Frame: And as every Man would serve himself rather than his Neighbour, in the Acquisition of Power, Pleasure, Property, or any other Social Good, real or apparent, every Man, engaged in Society, is to be looked upon, in some Respects, as desiring to *exclude* others.

— INDEED, I grant that the Social Instinct of Benevolence, is some Check upon this Selfish Principle; But it is so very feeble, that it would be quite ineffectual to prevent the Mischiefs arising from inordinate Self-Love, were there no stronger Curb to rein it in: For the Love of Self is implanted much more strongly in Mankind, than the Instinct of Benevolence.

III. THEREFORE REASON and REFLECTION must be called in to the Aid of the Social Principle. But what is the *Office* of Reason?—Not to extinguish Self-Love; that is impossible: And it might be questioned whether it would be right to attempt even to diminish it: For all Arts and Sciences, and the very Being of Government and Commerce, depend upon the right Exertion of this active Principle. And were it once re-

moved, or greatly weakened, Human Nature would make but feeble Efforts towards any Thing great or good. Nay in such a Case the Social Temper itself, and all the benevolent Affections, would be much debilitated in their Operations. Consequently the main Point to be aimed at, is neither to extinguish, nor enfeeble Self-Love, but to give it such a Direction, that it may promote the Publick Interest by pursuing its own. And then the very Spirit of Monopoly will operate for the Good of the Community.

DIVERT, therefore, the Pursuits of Self-Love from vicious or improper Objects, to those that are commendable and virtuous; Grant no Privileges to Sloth and Indolence; Give no Assistance to the engrossing Schemes of Monopolists; but raise a general Emulation among all Ranks and Professions to promote the publick Good, so that superior Industry and Skill, Integrity and Virtue shall alone receive Encouragement; — And then such a Government must have good Subjects, because it has taken away the Temptation to be bad ones; The Country will be blessed with Plenty and abound in Commerce, by Means of the Industry of its Inhabitants in their respective Callings; And the Subjects of such a State must feel the good Effects of its Influence, and be happy in each other,

because their several Pursuits, Interests, and Happiness will all coincide.

Now such a Plan of Government, the Aim of all wise Legislators, and the Study of Philosophers, will be found, upon the whole, to be nothing more than a strict Observance of the Christian Morals. For it is that System which conveys the truest Knowledge of the Appetites and Passions implanted in human Nature, and gives the best Advice for their Guidance and Application. The Self, and social Principles are there shewn to unite in one common Welfare both here, and hereafter. And Persons of every Rank and Station are laid under the strongest Ties both of Duty and Interest to promote this universal End, according to their respective Spheres, Relations and Capacities.

SINCE therefore all Persons are laid under such an indispensable Obligation, it were greatly to be wished, That Legislators, in their Endeavours to promote the general Good of their People, would attend more to the *preventive* Methods of Government, than to the *penal* and *coercive*. For if a Plan is not so contrived, as, for the most Part, to execute itself, no other Expedient will be able to remedy the Mischiefs and Inconveniencies arising from this Omission: And the having Recourse to Informations and Impeachments, Prosecutions and Punishments will only teach

the People to be either *ingeniously*, or *desperately* wicked, that is, to *elude* the Laws, or *insult* them.

WHEREFORE the *Preventive* Method should always be considered as the great Hinge on which every Good Government should turn; and *Penal* Sanctions only be regarded as additional Securities to be used occasionally.

Now this Method of Prevention may be fitly stiled *POLITY*; by which Term are implied not only such Political Regulations as are productive of *national* Customs and Fashions, Habits of Thinking, and Modes of Behaviour, but all Statutes and Ordinances, that are *so framed* as to secure their own Execution. For this is the proper Difference, and grand Distinction between *POLITY*, and *LAW*: The one being like a beautiful Machine, that regulates and adjusts its own Motions; and the other a clumsy imperfect Work, which is always out of Order, unless the Maker stands by to correct and amend it. And it may be further observed, That the distinguishing Characteristics of a People chiefly depend on their National Police; whereas the general System of Laws makes no such Difference. Ancient and Modern *Rome*, for Example, do not differ much from each other in the main Tenor of their Laws relating to the common Principles of Justice

and Equity; but as to the whole Body of their Polity, it is in a Manner diametrically opposite. And what is the Consequence?—Plainly this, That the very Genius and Temper of the People are changed, and that there is not a greater Contrast in Nature, than between the ancient *Romans*, and modern *Italians*.

BUT to return:—The CONCLUSION of the whole is this, That when the Auxiliary Motives of Reason and Reflection are called in to the Aid of social Love or diffusive Benevolence, this latter then becomes, in a good Degree, a Counter-agent to inordinate Self-love. So that the *Circulation* of Commerce may be conceived to proceed from the *Impulse* of two distinct Principles of Action in Society, analogous to the *Centrifugal*,—and *Centripetal* Powers in the Planetary System. But *unerring* Wisdom being the Guide and Director of these Powers in the Heavenly Bodies, causes that Constancy and Regularity in their Motions, which is never observeable in the Affairs of Commerce. And why is that? It is, Because the Circulation of Commerce being only directed by the Reason or Wisdom of Man, is therefore subject to all those Impediments, Obstructions, and Irregularities, which result from the Vices and Extravagancies, the partial Interests, the false Conceptions, and mistaken Policy of Mankind.

LASTLY, When the Subject is considered in a Religious View, every Argument that has been brought, seems to concur in one *general Proof*, That *Righteousness* or Virtue is the only true Grounds of the *Exaltation* of a Nation; but that *Sin* or Vice is a *Reproach* to any People, which, sooner or later, will infallibly be their Ruin. And if this be the Case, it therefore follows, That the Endeavours of every good Government,—The System of the Christian Religion in its native Purity,—And such a Plan of Commerce as is *truly* national, will always unite in perfect Harmony. For the Directions and Regulations of each of these are no other, than the making *private* co-incide with *publick*, and the *present* with *future* Happiness.

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